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Jean-Baptiste Etienne

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## Chapter Six

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## Chapter 6

### The Resignation of Jean-Baptiste Nozo

**"We await the events destined for us by  
Providence without the least inquietude."<sup>1</sup>**

Relations between Nozo, the members of the general council, and Étienne had grown increasingly tense. Now, in the months before the July meeting of the sexennial assembly, they all but collapsed. The brief council meeting held on 8 March, which convoked the assembly, would be the last held before its meeting. It also was the last ever attended by Nozo.<sup>2</sup>

Both the general and his opponents planned their tactics for the upcoming confrontation. Nozo understood "the peril he was facing."<sup>3</sup> He knew that without a carefully planned strategy on his part the assembly, in all likelihood, would strip him of his authority and choose a vicar general. All this would be in preparation for his deposition by a general assembly. Nozo had never before shied away from any confrontation. He secretly wrote to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars at the end of March asking for permission to name a vicar general.<sup>4</sup> Not mentioning the upcoming assembly, Nozo justified his request by saying that "since he has responsibility not only for the conduct of the Congregation of the Mission but also that of the Company of the Daughters of Charity; he is often in danger of succumbing to the fatigue and cares that are inseparable from their government. By the mercy of God, these two communities are growing and continually extending outside Europe to the world's farthest reaches. His faltering health increases the difficulty of his governance

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<sup>1</sup> Étienne to François Viallier, C.M., letter of 11 April 1842, *Étienne: Lettres 1839-45*, C: 40, H: 3, I (39-73), ACMP.

<sup>2</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 132-33, ACCR.

<sup>3</sup> Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 132.

<sup>4</sup> Apparently, Nozo wrote directly to the Holy See without using the services of Vito Guarini, the Roman procurator, as would have been customary.

under these conditions."<sup>5</sup>

Nozo claimed that his assistants general were of little help, either because of age or because of their other duties. Since he was without assistance, Nozo said that he was unable to leave Paris to conduct community business. He asked Gregory XVI to accord him the faculty to confide his powers, "limited and revocable and in the case of my absence or sickness," to a vicar general.<sup>6</sup> The pope agreed to this request in May.

In the months before the assembly Nozo, who was aware of the growing sentiment against him, tried to defuse the most damaging accusations that he faced. He had learned of Denis Hennecart's plan to publish his charges. He desperately wanted to prevent this. Nozo wrote his lawyer instructing him to do everything he could to stop the publication of this information, including purchasing Hennecart's silence. Nozo's lawyer, who happened to be Étienne's brother Louis, felt conscience-bound to violate his client's confidentiality. He warned the assistants of what Nozo was planning.<sup>7</sup> Hennecart's brochure appeared and did the damage that Nozo had feared.

Étienne and the assistants felt a great uneasiness about all aspects of Nozo's administration as superior general. They believed that Nozo had violated the constitutional requirement that he consult the general council "on the most important matters."<sup>8</sup> Under these circumstances, he needed the consent of the majority of his consultors. Étienne charged, "Monsieur Nozo has clearly dealt

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<sup>5</sup> "Pièces Justificatives," *Circulaires*, 2: 643. The public excuse that would later be used concerning Nozo's poor health requiring him to have the assistance of a vicar general had some validity to it. In the minutes of the general council meeting of 31 August 1835, the following notation appears:

The assistants general understanding that the first of their duties, on behalf of the Congregation, is to conserve for many years the head which it has chosen. Considering the superior general's weak health, in conformity with the constitutions and the rules of their office, they believe it their duty to attend immediately to this important part of their responsibility. They have taken the resolution of consulting the house physician Monsieur Rathcau and another doctor, Monsieur Récamier, to obtain their professional opinions concerning the superior general's health and the means that should be taken to fortify and conserve it. This consultation has taken place...and the doctors have fixed the regime that the superior general must follow in the future under the vigilance of the assistants general.

*General Council Minutes*, 1: 69, ACGR.

<sup>6</sup> "Pièces Justificatives," *Circulaires*, 2: 643

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> This is from a lengthy, undated memorandum in Étienne's handwriting. The document details the charges against Nozo as formulated by the general council. Étienne also gives some background on the sexennial assembly and subsequent events. There is a later notation in Gabriel Perboyre's handwriting indicating a probable date of June or July 1842. *Nozo II, Documents 1843-66*, C 39, bas 2°, 26, ACMP.

with many grave matters having the potential of compromising the Congregation's honor and existence without seeking his assistants' advice."<sup>9</sup> Étienne would later explain,

Despite our profound sadness, despite our lively concern about our Congregation's future...we kept within the limits traced for us by our constitutions [to respect the superior general's person and authority]. We thus had no choice but to leave Monsieur Nozo a free hand in public. Fortified in our consciences by Saint Vincent's promises, we placed our confidence about the Congregation's future in divine providence's hands....We observed a complete silence concerning Monsieur Nozo's acts until the sexennial assembly which would meet to examine the condition of the congregation....At this time we planned to fulfill our responsibility and speak publicly."<sup>10</sup>

In his biography, Rosset said that "until the time of Monsieur Nozo's resignation he [Étienne] kept silent." Rosset claimed that he "had found no trace in his [Étienne's] papers of his active participation in the actions of the sexennial assembly, and the internal troubles that followed it." Rosset admits only that "here and there" in Étienne's correspondence during 1841 and 1842 "he did make passing allusions to the afflicting events he was witnessing." However, "he carefully avoided telling any one his secret sorrow....Prayer and work were his only refuge."<sup>11</sup> This claim is not credible given the irrefutable evidence of Étienne's leading role in the struggle with Nozo.<sup>12</sup>

Étienne's position was that "given Nozo's unfortunate administration and the public scandals he had caused, the assistants had a sworn responsibility to save the Congregation from the dangers that menaced its interests, its reputation, and its very existence."<sup>13</sup> Under the circumstances, "the sole measure" that could remedy the situation was for the sexennial assembly to withdraw Nozo's powers

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 137.

<sup>12</sup> "Notes de M. Perboyre, Gabriel, sur les agissements de MM. Cremisini et Guarini, Vite," *Envoi: Étienne*, Casier: 40, Haut: 1, 3, ACMP.

<sup>13</sup> Étienne, Nozo, 2, ACMP. To illustrate the "seriousness of the responsibility" felt by the assistants, Étienne also quoted the oath taken by each assistant after his election: "I call on Jesus Christ, who will judge me, that if anything should occur that warrants the deposition of the superior general, as soon as the matter shall have been sufficiently proved, I will faithfully announce it to the Congregation and at the same time I will vote to convoke a general assembly," "Caput IX. De Electione Assistantium et Admonitoris Superioris Generalis," *Constitutiones* §V, 96-97.

and give them to a vicar general.<sup>14</sup> The vicar general would then have the responsibility of preparing for the convocation of a general assembly. The assembly would "judge the cause of Monsieur Nozo and depose him if it judged him guilty of an offense foreseen by the constitutions for a superior general's removal."<sup>15</sup>

When the three Italian delegates arrived in Paris, they heard for the first time about the superior general's scandals and legal troubles.<sup>16</sup> The Italian assistant, Pasquale Fiorillo, told them of the "miseries and dissensions that divided the general council."<sup>17</sup> They also learned that the four French provinces had recommended that the sexennial assembly convoke a general assembly.<sup>18</sup>

The minutes of the assembly do not reflect any of the turmoil that took place at the mother house from 27 to 31 July.<sup>19</sup> According to Guarini's version of events, each day two sessions of the assembly took place. One was "legal," meeting under the superior general's presidency, and the other, that he described as "illegal," met in the mother house library, supposedly without Nozo's knowledge.<sup>20</sup> At these unofficial sessions, Étienne and the assistants laid out their charges against the general for the assembled delegates.<sup>21</sup> Guarini commented that they did not even spare Nozo criticism of how he dressed.<sup>22</sup> Given the superior general's acumen, he undoubtedly took the opportunity of privately rallying his supporters. Nozo refuted the

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<sup>14</sup> The thirteen members of the eighth sexennial assembly included the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Nozo, the assistants general Pierre Le Go, Jean Grappin, Jean-Marie Aladel, and Pasquale Fiorillo. Jean-Baptiste Étienne was present as procurator and secretary general. The delegates from the Italian provinces included Nicola Legnito from Naples, Pier Paolo Sturchi from Turin, and Vito Guarini from Rome. The French provinces were represented by Jean-François Chossat from Lyons; Barthélémy Trouve from Aquitaine; Joseph Wagnier from Picardy; and Nicholas Martin from France [Paris]. At this time, both the provinces of Spain and Portugal had been suppressed by their respective liberal, anticlerical governments. The provinces of Lithuania and Warsaw were cut off from Paris because of Russian imperial religious policies. The province of the United States, because it was outside Europe, had no right of representation. See *Circulaires*, 2: 521-22.

<sup>15</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> *Relazione di quanto precedette accompagnò e seguì un ricorso avanzato all' S. Sede nel 1842 dal Signor Michele Cremisini visitatore della Missione, pel Signor Vito Guarini, procuratore general presso la S. Sede della stessa Congregazione* (Rome, 1870). This document is an important counterpart to Étienne's more famous *Notice*. Guarini addressed this account to the confreres of the Roman province in September 1870 as a response to the August publication of Étienne's *Notice*. This edition, however, must be dated to sometime after 1896. [See footnote on pp. 9-10]. The issuance of this edition was in response to the continuing historical and mythical blame laid by the French on the "intrigues" of the Italians. Étienne, *Ecrits et Documents*, C 40, bas 3°, B 15, ACMP. Guarini claimed that the Italian delegates found a copy of the Hennecart brochure waiting for them in their rooms. He describes this document as an "infamous libel" from an "ungrateful relative." *Relazione*, 19, ACMP.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Poussou, 1, ACMP.

<sup>19</sup> *Acta VIII Conventus sexennalis, 1841, 800-07*, ACGR.

<sup>20</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 20, ACMP.

<sup>21</sup> Poussou, 2, ACMP.

<sup>22</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 20, ACMP.

charges against him, while making countercharges against the assistants and Étienne.<sup>23</sup>

According to Guarini's account, two French delegates, Joseph Wagnier and Barthélémy Trouve, were indignant at Étienne and the assistants. They attributed their actions to "intrigue, vendetta, and ambition."<sup>24</sup> During the assembly, the three Italian delegates supposedly "said nothing and betrayed no emotions," as they witnessed the spectacle of French internecine warfare.<sup>25</sup> In fact, however, the Italians gave their votes to Nozo's cause.

Guarini recalled that he had felt perplexed by the charges against Nozo. He said that he had spoken confidentially to the first assistant, the aged Pierre Le Go.<sup>26</sup> Le Go supposedly told him that the general was being "persecuted," and that "he was a saint."<sup>27</sup> According to Le Go, the opposition came from those who were fighting Nozo's attempts to restore regularity to the community, as it existed among the Italians. Le Go also supposedly told Guarini not to worry since he was confident that Nozo would emerge victorious.<sup>28</sup>

The assembly's first session began at 5:00 P.M. on 27 July 1841. As Nozo opened the assembly, he proposed the nomination of Antoine Poussou as vicar general.<sup>29</sup> At the end of the session, the assembly elected Étienne as secretary.<sup>30</sup> This move suggested that the anti-Nozo party controlled a majority of the votes. According to Poussou, the delegates were split into two groups. The majority party consisted of the four assistants, Étienne, and two of the French delegates, Chossat and Martin.<sup>31</sup> The pro-Nozo party consisted of the three Italian delegates and two French delegates, Trouve and Wagnier. To choose a vicar general required the vote of a majority, plus one. The anti-Nozo party seemed to have the votes it needed.

On the following day, Nozo formally nominated Poussou to serve

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<sup>23</sup> Given Nozo's skillful maneuvering, it is hard to accept Guarini's claim that at the sexennial assembly "he had been a victim of his own simplicity." *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Guarini testified that the Italians previously had formed a very positive opinion of Nozo during his visit to Italy and Rome in 1837 for the celebration of the centenary of Saint Vincent's canonization. He mentioned that, at the time, no one spoke of anything but Nozo's "amiability, sanctity, generosity, and virtue." See *ibid.*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* How seriously Le Go's testimony should be taken is colored by the fact that Guarini in his account admitted that Le Go was almost an "imbecile" because of his advanced age (*ibid.*, 21).

<sup>29</sup> For a biographical notice of Poussou see *Relations Abrégées*, 2: 321-405.

<sup>30</sup> *Acta VIII*, 807, ACGR.

<sup>31</sup> *Poussou*, 3, ACMP. This statement would seem to conflict to Guarini's account of Le Go's support for Nozo.

as vicar general.<sup>32</sup> He gave as his reasons "my inability to sustain the weight of my office due to my frequent illnesses."<sup>33</sup> Nozo then renounced the faculty given him by the Holy See. He accepted that the assembly would choose a vicar general as foreseen by the constitutions. The assembly unanimously approved Poussou's nomination.<sup>34</sup>

At the third session held on 29 July, Nozo gave the assembly the text of the Roman rescript that he had renounced. The delegates, "moved by the example of the general's humility...and wanting to express their gratitude for his generous act, offered to reserve him some of his faculties." They did this "as much to preserve the generalate's honor as for the respect due to his person."<sup>35</sup>

The assembly honored Nozo's request that the new vicar general not take office until 1 November. The delegates reserved to the general his rights to name visitors upon presentation by the vicar general, to grant dispensations from vows, and to convoke a general assembly after consulting his council. This last concession was Nozo's only hope. Under the circumstances, it seemed unlikely that he would soon consent to convoke a general assembly whose purpose would be to judge whether to depose him or not.<sup>36</sup> The vicar general was to write Nozo at least every three months, and ask his advice regarding important matters.<sup>37</sup>

Guarini said that Nicola Legnito, the Neapolitan delegate, believed that the only authority the sexennial assembly possessed was to decide "whether a general assembly was necessary."<sup>38</sup> He said that any other action taken by the assembly would be "null and void."<sup>39</sup> After the assembly, this became Nozo's position as well. Guarini believed that it was at this point Nozo made a fatal error in judgment.

<sup>32</sup> Poussou was chosen as a compromise candidate. Guarini reported that Nozo had first intended to appoint Jean Brioude, the visitor of the province of Picardy. Étienne commented that the assembly chose Poussou "Since he had passed many years in a faraway mission [he had been prefect apostolic of the Congregation's missions in Syria] and had only been in France a few months before being called to fulfill the functions he would exercise [as vicar general]. He had played no part in all the debates which had taken place in the Congregation since the election of Monsieur Nozo, and was not even in the position to have knowledge about them." Étienne, *Nozo*, 9, ACMP.

<sup>33</sup> *Acta VIII*, 808, ACGR.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 806-07.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 809.

<sup>36</sup> In his circular letter of 1 June 1842, Nozo commented with respect to convoking a general assembly, "My opinion was that it would be better to defer it for a while in order to allow the dissipation of the storms that could obscure the truth and so that matters could be judged more calmly and with more security for the future." *Nozo II, Documents*, C, 39, 24, ACMP.

<sup>37</sup> *Acta VIII*, 810, ACGR.

<sup>38</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 21, ACMP.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

He thought that if the general had used the papal faculty to name a vicar general, he could have done so based entirely on his own conditions. In this way, he could have "foiled his enemies' intrigues," and pulled off "a counter coup-d'état."<sup>40</sup>

As expected, Étienne's abbreviated mythic account of the sexennial assembly often bears little resemblance to what was the actual course of its convoluted events. Étienne claimed that it had been the assembly's judgment that the general, having "compromised the honor, the interests and the Congregation's very existence" was "unfit to govern."<sup>41</sup> It therefore had stripped Nozo of his authority. He does not mention, however, that this decision was made on the basis of a seven-to-five split among the delegates and that one less vote would have defeated the anti-Nozo party. On this basis, the assembly's agreement to Poussou's appointment cannot be said, as claimed by Étienne, to represent a "unanimous" decision to strip Nozo of his powers and prepare the way for his removal as superior general. There obviously were some delegates at the assembly who while willing to support the nomination of a vicar general, still supported Nozo enough to agree to conditions favorable to him.

According to Étienne's account, Nozo had "avowed on his knees that his conduct had rendered him unworthy to occupy his post. He then asked pardon from the Congregation for the scandals he had caused it."<sup>42</sup> In another place, Étienne added that Nozo had done this "in tears."<sup>43</sup> He said that Nozo had told the delegates "that for some days now he had felt the need to refrain from saying mass. He did not think he could go to the altar again until he reconciled himself to God by means of a retreat he also vowed to make."<sup>44</sup> Étienne said that Nozo had asked for special consideration from the assembly to prevent his legal adversaries from using his "humiliation" to triumph over him.<sup>45</sup> As part of this special consideration, Nozo requested that Poussou not take office until 1 November and asked that his poor health be the public reason given for the vicar general's appointment. Finally, he wanted to be the one to announce the appointment.<sup>46</sup> Étienne goes on to say, "He also knew that out of regard for his difficult position the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Étienne, *Nozo*, 2, ACMP.

<sup>42</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Étienne, *Nozo*, 14, ACMP.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



assembly would agree that the minutes of the meeting would not contain one word that reflected badly on him."<sup>47</sup>

Étienne also claimed that in Nozo's public remarks "to which all the assembly members could attest," he had expressed his satisfaction at the measures taken in his regard. Further, he had approved of the manner in which "a happy solution had been found for the critical situation that the Congregation found itself in."<sup>48</sup> Antoine Poussou adds the following testimony to this as well: "He signed the acts [of the assembly] freely and wholeheartedly. After the assembly's close, everyone at the mother house was a witness to his joy as he embraced each assistant. He told them how happy he was to have the assembly relieve him of the great burdens that had weighed upon him."<sup>49</sup>

If the pattern of Étienne's mythic construction holds true, Nozo probably did make some sort of emotional appeal and public expression of sorrow. The general later acknowledged that "my sins are one true cause of the evils we suffer."<sup>50</sup> This emotive behavior would have been in keeping with what we know of Nozo's volatile personality. In the *Notice*, Étienne made the comment, "The assembly felt touched by the humble sentiments that he [Nozo] had expressed. It believed in his sincerity, and thought that charity demanded that it condescend to agree to his desire. The events that followed proved that Monsieur Nozo had fooled the delegates, and that the danger the assembly had tried to avoid would only become more severe."<sup>51</sup>

Vito Guarini, in his own mythic account, commented that at the assembly's end he still did not know which reputation of Nozo to believe, that he was a saint as Pierre Le Go had told him or that he was "an inept, incapable, dissipated demon" as claimed by his opponents.<sup>52</sup> In reading Guarini's account, however, his negative opinion of Étienne is apparent. Guarini correctly observed that after the assembly, neither Nozo's supporters nor his opponents, could long accept the status quo.

Nozo reminded the departing delegates of the required secrecy concerning the vicar general's nomination. They were to inform only

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<sup>47</sup>If this charge were true the legality of the assembly would have been hopelessly compromised. Étienne, *Nozo*, 15, ACMP.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Poussou*, 3, ACMP.

<sup>50</sup>Undated letter which is described in an unknown hand as probably being written "from Cahors where he had retired" [after the sexennial assembly] to "Monsieur Baudrez his correspondent in Paris." *M. Nozo: Administration Générale*, ACMP.

<sup>51</sup>Étienne, *Notice*, 40.

<sup>52</sup>Guarini, *Relazione*, 22, ACMP.

their respective visitors of the assembly's decisions. Vito Guarini mentioned that on his return trip, Nicola Legnito, had spoken publicly about "the ambition and trickery of the enemies of Monsieur Nozo." Consequently, word of the "Parisian miseries" began to spread immediately in Italy.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, back in Paris, Nozo did not inform Antoine Poussou of his selection until 15 October. On 28 October, the general finally issued the circular letter informing the community of the sexennial assembly's results.<sup>54</sup> Nozo explained that because of the Double Family's growth and his own "frequent enough indispositions," he had asked the pope for permission to name a vicar general. He said he had foreseen that the vicar general could "substitute for me in case of illness or a long absence." Nozo explained that at the time of the assembly, "I felt a great need for rest and tranquility." This led him to conclude that "the moment had arrived to put my plan into operation." Nozo said that he had informed the assembly of the permission he had received and his choice to fill the position of vicar general. According to Nozo, the assembly "accepted my proposal and agreed to my choice." He then announced Poussou's appointment. He noted that Poussou possessed "all the powers that the constitutions attribute to the vicar general...and under the conditions foreseen by them."<sup>55</sup> The differences between the assembly's decisions and Nozo's version of them are apparent.

Nozo ended his circular saying,

This is why, as of the first of November, you should contact Monsieur Poussou for all the matters that normally are the superior general's concern. I urge you to give him the same obedience as you would to the superior general. Matters will rest in this state until the general assembly meets. I will convoke the assembly when, before the Lord, I judge it to be expedient. I will make this decision after consulting my council. Above all, I will consider the good of the Congregation and the wishes of my confreres. I can say, with all sincerity, that the Congregation's prosperity, and its members' welfare, have always been the goal of my weak efforts, and the object of my most ardent desires.<sup>56</sup>

In late October, Poussou and Nozo had four or five meetings. According to Poussou, the superior general "spoke at length about his

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>54</sup> Nozo, *Circulaires*, 2: 528-29.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

imagined persecution by the assistants and the blow he had received to his personal honor. During these meetings, Monsieur Nozo never said one word to me about the Congregation's interests. He never gave me any advice concerning the direction of its affairs. I never learned anything useful from him. I was profoundly disappointed, because in all these meetings he never appeared to be concerned about anything but himself. I therefore resolved not to speak to him any further about anything."<sup>57</sup>

On 2 November 1841, Poussou presided over his first general council meeting.<sup>58</sup> Nozo left Paris for Cahors. He would reside there for much of the next year.

Even with Poussou's arrival and Nozo's departure, the "crisis was far from over and became more dangerous and violent."<sup>59</sup> According to Étienne, Nozo "had spread the word among the confreres' and sisters' houses that the assistants were persecuting him."<sup>60</sup> He charged that the sexennial assembly had exceeded its powers. Nozo assured anyone who would listen that "he still possessed his authority as superior general and could exercise it whenever the occasion warranted."<sup>61</sup> He also spoke about the "self-interest, jealousy, ambition, calumnies, and independent spirit of...the party of rebellion."<sup>62</sup> Its members possessed "sentiments totally contrary to a spirit of submission and respect toward authority."<sup>63</sup> By the beginning of January, Poussou wrote that Nozo had repeated his charges, "everywhere he has traveled, even while he was claiming to be silent."<sup>64</sup> Poussou said that he had received so many letters telling him what Nozo was saying that he "now knew them by heart."<sup>65</sup>

The first major post-assembly clash between Nozo and Poussou, Étienne, and the assistants came early in November. At an extraordinary meeting held on 15 November, the council addressed Nozo's refusal to sign the financial account books for the year 1840 and for 1841 up to his departure date. The council declared that the general had refused to sign "for no legitimate reason," and they certified the accuracy of the accounts as presented by Étienne.<sup>66</sup> At the next meeting on 22 November, Poussou

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<sup>57</sup> Poussou, 1, ACMP.

<sup>58</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 133-34, ACGR.

<sup>59</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Baudrez, 1, ACMP.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Poussou, 1, ACMP.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 143-44, ACGR.

asked the council's advice on how to address the confusion among the Daughters of Charity caused by Nozo's circular letter to them of 28 October.<sup>67</sup> The vicar general said that Nozo's words "are being misinterpreted by some and that many others are uncertain over the vicar general's real authority. Consequently, I fear that under the present circumstances, a division may appear that could have unfortunate results."<sup>68</sup>

The text of Nozo's letter read:

My reason for addressing you today is to inform you that in view of the great need that I feel for rest and tranquility that I have chosen, to replace me provisionally in the Congregation's government, a confrere whom I know to have all the qualities necessary for this position. I have given all my powers, with the title of vicar general of the Congregation, to Monsieur Antoine Poussou.... Consequently, in the future, it is to him that you should address all the matters that pertain to the superior general. This situation will continue until you receive new instructions in this regard. I have also instructed my vicar general to give me an account, from time to time, of the state of your Company.... I ask you, my very dear sisters, not to be preoccupied with this measure. Nothing here should upset you, since I have taken this action after consultation with my council. Pay no attention to the storms that certain persons may seek to spread.... The sole source of truth, for you and for all the members of Saint Vincent's Double Family, will always be those persons animated by his spirit, who by their position in the Congregation have the responsibility of watching over all things.<sup>69</sup>

The council advised Poussou that it was "necessary and urgent" that he immediately write a clarifying circular.<sup>70</sup> Poussou issued his own carefully worded letter to the Daughters of Charity on 24 November. While avoiding "superfluous explanations" of the present "critical situation," Poussou urged the sisters to "scorn the storms caused by malintentioned persons who are only seeking to cause trouble.... By means of this wise reserve, you will quiet the confusion and the spiritual pain in which some of you appear to have fallen."<sup>71</sup> He also told the sisters that he hoped that the "difficult and critical situation that we face" would not last long. He added a piece of information that Nozo had failed to mention: that this state of affairs would last only until the general assembly. On a personal note Poussou added, "Let us

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-47.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>69</sup> *D.C., Nozo: 1841, C 198, 1°, ACMP.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *D.C., Poussou: 1841, C 198, 1°, ACMP.*

hope that the assembly comes soon, for I long for the moment when this burden will be lifted from me. Then, I will have my freedom."<sup>72</sup>

At the council meeting of 6 December, Poussou asked the assistants' advice on how to handle Hennecart's civil suit against Nozo and the Congregation. Hennecart's attack on Nozo's activities had caused great scandal, and the suit seemed far from being settled.<sup>73</sup> The archbishop of Paris had expressed concern over the situation.<sup>74</sup> He "demanded that the Congregation do all that it could to stop this unfortunate suit and the publicity it caused."<sup>75</sup> The council observed, "This entire unfortunate affair is attributable to Monsieur Nozo personally. He has acted on his own in this affair. He has never consulted his council over the details of his involvement...nor the sources of the capital that he employed in these operations."<sup>76</sup> They realized, however, that Hennecart's suit had also compromised the Congregation, since Hennecart was suing it as well as its superior general. Caught in a very difficult position, the council decided to have Poussou write to Nozo and inform him of the archbishop's concerns. They also appointed a legal commission to advise them on how to extricate the Congregation from the legal difficulties it faced. If Poussou had come into his position with neutral feelings toward Nozo, this now had changed.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Charges against Nozo: "The facts speak for themselves."<sup>78</sup>**

As time went on, more evidence surfaced concerning Nozo's financial and personal activities. In a memorandum prepared for the general council Étienne commented, "We understand that we have another and important duty to fulfill, that of gathering all the documents that

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> The voluminous records of Nozo's legal troubles with both Ferdinand Bailly and Denis Hennecart have been rediscovered recently in the procurator general's archives in Paris. C 10<sup>o</sup>, 1 *Procès: Nozo/Bailly*. A. I, II, III, IV. B. I. *Correspondance*, II. *Documents*, III. *Pièces Communiquées*, IV. *Fondes Corne/Transactions*, V. *Rentes/Bailly*. C 10<sup>o</sup> 1. *Procès: Nozo/Denys*, I. *Documents*, II. *Appel par Denys du Jugement* 7. XII. 41, III. *Appel par Denys du Jugement*, 12. VII. 43, IV. *Mémoire Imprimés*, ACPG.

<sup>74</sup> A year earlier, in the summer of 1840, the famed Daughter of Charity, Sister Rosalie Rendu, had appealed to Archbishop Affre to use his influence and try to head off the public scandal between Bailly and Nozo. For texts of these letters see *Nozo II, Documents, 1835-42*, C 39, bas 2<sup>o</sup>, ACPM.

<sup>75</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 151, ACPG.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> In this letter of 1 January, Poussou told his correspondent, "I believe, and I am entirely convinced that the restoration of Monsieur Nozo would be harmful to the Congregation which he has already gravely compromised....The reasons for this conviction are numerous. I will not report them in full here, suffice it to say that Monsieur Nozo has lost the esteem and the confidence of the clergy of Paris and the episcopate. This reason, by itself, would appear sufficient for the company to be given another head." *Poussou*, 4, ACPM.

<sup>78</sup> Étienne, *Nozo*, 3, ACPM.

will prove to the Congregation the true motives for what we have done. This task is a difficult one to undertake, since in doing so we must accuse someone who because of his office should be the recipient of our respect and veneration. Our Constitutions oblige us, through our oath of office, to watch over the Congregation's health, and to spare it from a chief who is unworthy of governing it."<sup>79</sup> Étienne framed the devastating charges against his archenemy. These accusations "showed the impossibility of Monsieur Nozo resuming his administration of the Congregation."<sup>80</sup> The first charge was "that the character manifested by Monsieur Nozo in his administration has set the Congregation in a disastrous direction." The second was that Nozo's "abuse of his authority, and his violation of the Constitutions has led to his compromising the Congregation's material interests, its honor, and its very existence." Finally, Étienne raised charges about Nozo's "personal moral conduct."<sup>81</sup>

As an example of Nozo's official misconduct, Étienne laid out an attack on his handling of the Bailly affair. He pointed out that while the constitutions commissioned the procurator general to take care of community litigation, Nozo had insisted upon handling the Bailly lawsuit himself. According to Étienne, Nozo "because of his susceptible and suspicious character" made it impossible for the council members to intervene in any way. He saw their advice to be prudent as "an expression of criticism against his conduct that revealed a secret support for Monsieur Bailly's cause." Étienne noted that Nozo was motivated solely by a personal "irritation and acrimony" against Ferdinand Bailly. These feelings were so extreme that "he was without any sentiment of charity toward him."<sup>82</sup>

Given Nozo's unreasonable manner of acting, Étienne said, anyone could have predicted that the Congregation would lose its legal battle. The superior general insisted on appealing the adverse verdict and launching a publicity campaign against Bailly. The council advised him to follow Saint Vincent's example and let the matter drop. When Nozo insisted, the council gave in and commissioned Étienne and Aladel to write a brochure defending the superior general and the Congregation. Étienne said that he and Aladel had accepted this

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* In later years this would be Étienne's own stance toward Nozo as well. Nozo's life after his resignation was a sad one, and Étienne's treatment of him was cruel and uncharitable. For more information see *Nozo II, Documents, 1842-1866*, B 42-66, ACMP.

charge only under obedience, and they refused to take any personal responsibility for its consequences. The council agreed to let Nozo publish this defense only after a commission of lawyers and theologians had examined it. Étienne charged that Nozo ignored these conditions and published 3,000 copies of the brochure. These "he sent to all the French dioceses, making public the details of the unfortunate debate."<sup>83</sup>

Bailly replied to the brochure, thus "augmenting the scandal and entirely discrediting Monsieur Nozo in the eyes of the clergy and the public." The financial judgment against the Congregation and in Bailly's favor was for more than 150,000 francs. Étienne noted that the true costs of the case were much higher, but no one knew the exact figure since Nozo gave the council no accounting of the expenses.<sup>84</sup>

Étienne moved on to discuss the second charge concerning Nozo's abuse of his authority and his constitutional violations. He pointed out that in the Bailly case Nozo had at least minimally consulted his council. In the instances he promised to cite, the superior general had never consulted his assistants and thus bore full responsibility.<sup>85</sup> The charges in this category dealt largely with Nozo's financial involvement with Denis Hennecart. Étienne alleged that Nozo speculated with funds entrusted to him by Hennecart to the total of 225,000 francs.<sup>86</sup>

Étienne also charged that Nozo had asked the treasurer of the Daughters of Charity to give him 50,000 francs from the community's treasury. According to this account, after receiving the money Nozo "forced the sister to promise never to mention this to anyone, not even the superioress general." The sister in question soon regretted her promise. She repeatedly pleaded with Nozo to inform the superioress general of his action. Nozo finally did speak with the superioress general, "but he spoke to her in terms not of a deed that was already done, but as if it was a loan he wished to arrange." On a subsequent occasion, Nozo tried unsuccessfully to extract an additional 10,000 francs from the sister-treasurer.<sup>87</sup>

Étienne cited another incident that he said had taken place soon after the sexennial assembly. Nozo requested that Étienne, as procurator general, give him 25,000 francs "while refusing to say how he intended to spend these funds." Étienne commented that "the procu-

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>86</sup> Included in this amount was money entrusted to him by various Daughters of Charity from their personal funds. *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

rator general invoked the authority of his office and refused to honor his [Nozo's] repeated requests for the funds, without the general council's authorization." The council refused to authorize the transfer of these funds "until he [Nozo] would certify that he would spend them only in the Congregation's interests."<sup>88</sup> Nozo would not accept this condition. At this point, Étienne could not resist adding the comment that "this resistance from the procurator general caused Monsieur Nozo to feel an irritation toward him that he could not conceal. This later motivated him [Nozo] to make the most odious charges against him [Étienne]. If he [Étienne] had been more compliant, he could probably have remained in his [Nozo's] good graces."<sup>89</sup>

Another charge leveled against Nozo was that he had "made many long journeys at considerable expense in his own coach." Étienne noted that Nozo had never received any funds from the procurator general's office to pay for these trips. He speculated that since Nozo had no family wealth, he could not see how he could cover these costs without secretly using funds that belonged to the Congregation. Étienne asked rhetorically about the judgment that should be drawn about a superior "who has lost sight of the demands of justice and the delicacy of conscience. Someone who would use his influence and authority as means to favor his private interests and undertake speculations that were unworthy of his position!"<sup>90</sup>

In the third part of his indictment, Étienne laid out what were the most disturbing charges against Nozo, "his conduct with respect to his personal morality."<sup>91</sup> Étienne commented, "To the great astonishment of the members of Monsieur Nozo's council, he revealed certain deplorable personal dispositions. Before his election, no suspicion of these had become known. He had a reputation for appropriate conduct, and even a reserved and austere reputation...However, as Saint Vincent's successor as superior general...of a community of more than 4,000 Daughters of Charity...we have become aware of certain familiarities that have compromised his personal morality."<sup>92</sup> Étienne noted that everyone on the council would have liked to believe that these incidents were isolated examples of imprudent behavior. However, given the evidence they had no choice but to believe "that these

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<sup>88</sup> Since there is no record of any official council meetings between March and November of 1841 this controversy must have taken place outside of a formally convoked meeting. *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*



incidents reflected a long-standing habit."<sup>93</sup>

According to Étienne, soon after Nozo's election the council members had the first indications that something was wrong with the general's behavior toward Daughters of Charity. They brought these incidents to the general's attention, pointing out the consequences of such "imprudent actions," especially if they were to become known among the sisters and their superiors. Yet, "Monsieur Nozo continued to permit himself improper familiarities with persons of the opposite sex. This caused the fear that there might be even more serious deeds leading to the most disastrous consequences."<sup>94</sup> In this section of the *exposé*, Étienne cites seven different examples of Nozo's alleged personal misconduct with sisters.

1. Interviewing sisters by themselves, in particular for spiritual matters. During these interviews he often embraced them, held their hands in his, and conducted himself in other ways that were not at all edifying. When he embraced them, he would embrace them very forcefully. He had them come to visit him often and spent many hours with them for no other purpose than this sort of familiarity.
2. He manifested his preference for certain sisters whom he visited often or invited to visit him. Usually these sisters were young and highly favored by nature.
3. During his trips, forgetting the propriety of his character, position, and his relatively youthful age, he had sisters accompany him in his carriage. In these circumstances he permitted the same familiarities and once even allowed a sister to fall asleep in his arms. To heighten this unbelievable imprudence he often traveled in his carriage late at night accompanied by only one sister.
4. Violating canonical regulations, he heard sisters' confessions in his rooms using neither grill nor confessional. He did this with the sisters for whom he had a particular affection.
5. Joining seduction with immorality, he told these innocent daughters that nothing was wrong about these familiarities because he did them; but they would be so if they came from someone else.
6. When conscientious remorse stung these sisters, they told him that they felt guilty for receiving this sort of familiarity so severely forbidden by their rules. He told them that as Saint Vincent's successor, it was he who interpreted the rules. He assured them that they had no need to confess, and in doing so he added seduction to the other faults that were already so great in themselves. He would hear their confessions and after leaving the confessional permitted himself these same familiarities.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

7. This shows that the penchant of Monsieur Nozo for these problems was deep seated. It was primarily for his guilt in this regard that at the recent sexennial assembly he was forced to give up the Congregation's administration.<sup>95</sup>

It has come to our attention that this behavior has continued since then and has become even more grave. During this time, in a house in the provinces, he several times embraced a young sister and expressed evidently passionate sentiments. He offered her money. The sister interpreted this offer to be a means of seduction, and she indignantly withdrew. She was at the point of abandoning her vocation out of fear that all the Lazarists were like their superior general and that she would become a victim of their corruption.

Again during this period, in another house of the province, during the twenty-four hours he stayed there he twice received and three times went to see a young sister in her room. He embraced her several times, pressing her closely against him, and he told her that he had never felt for any other person the affection that he felt for her.

What is even more afflicting is that he told these two sisters that nothing was wrong in his relationship with them and that they had nothing to confess. Yet, he still recommended that they observe the greatest secrecy about these familiarities.<sup>96</sup> He thus joined to his flagrant culpability a perverse teaching that could not help but lead him to the profanation of the sacraments and lead to the most dangerous illusions.

We will abstain from making any comment on these deplorable circumstances. The facts speak for themselves. It is the Congregation that God will reprove if it allows its superior general to act in this way without incurring the indignation and the scorn of all the members who compose it.<sup>97</sup>

Étienne commented that given Nozo's behavior it would have been worse than negligent for the council not to convoke a general assembly to "expose and judge" the general.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> There is no evidence that these morals charges were discussed formally at the sexennial assembly.

<sup>96</sup> The behavior described here, if accurate, seems to indicate the classic behavior of a sexual abuser.

<sup>97</sup> Nozo II, *Documents*, 1842-1866, B 42-66, 17-18, ACMP.

<sup>98</sup> Étienne also quoted the Constitutions in this regard which in Chapter II, *De cura, auctoritate et potestate Congregationis erga Superiorem Generalem* (On the responsibility, authority, and power of the Congregation with regard to the superior general) speaks about the deposition of the superior general for moral offenses,

With regard to deposition, that is, if he should commit some very serious external sin, especially if he should fall into a sin of lust through sexual intercourse, or if he should kill or seriously wound someone, or if he should take the goods of some house as his own or dissipate or give them away, or if he should hold to heretical teaching, which cases, it is hoped, will never occur. In these cases, if the matter is sufficiently attested, the Congregation is to depose him without dismissing him from it [the Congregation], even if the matter demands it, as will be stated below.

On 1 January 1842, Antoine Poussou issued his first circular letter. He gave a verbatim summary of the sexennial assembly and its decisions.<sup>99</sup> He was straightforward as to the reasons for the care with which he was reporting these events and decisions:

I am doing this to calm those confreres who, being ignorant of the manner in which the assembly dealt with these things, seem to have conceived some apprehension that the rules have been violated and that there is a lack of respect for the superior general. This account is also to satisfy the reasonable desire of many others who have complained that externs know more about what is going on in the Congregation than they do. Finally, it is to counteract the false impressions arising from a libelous account spread in Paris and neighboring dioceses that is not faithful to the acts of the assembly and is written by malintentioned persons.<sup>100</sup>

Poussou took care to quote verbatim from the assembly's minutes and from the constitutions to answer Nozo's distortions.<sup>101</sup> Jean Grappin, an assistant general, wrote a more inflammatory criticism of Nozo's distortions, and his actions as superior general. Nozo commented that he felt he had to respond to the "horrors" of what Grappin was saying.<sup>102</sup>

Meanwhile, events were taking place in Rome that would aggravate the crisis over Nozo's position and future. They would lead to another outbreak of French and Italian antagonisms within the Congregation.

### **The Holy See and the Nozo Controversy**

On 27 November 1841, the French ambassador to the Holy See, the Comte de Latour-Maubourg, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, François Guizot, about the government's opposition to the Jesuit college in Beirut moving to Aleppo. Latour-Maubourg commented that "everyone here at the Vatican, Propaganda, and among the Jesuits attributes this policy to the Lazarists and the influence that they enjoy

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<sup>99</sup> Poussou, *Circulaires*, 2: 535.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 536.

<sup>101</sup> Poussou, 4, ACMP.

<sup>102</sup> Baudrez, 2, ACMP.

with the government in Paris."<sup>103</sup> The ambassador reported that at his last papal audience "the pope expressed ill humor against the Lazarists, and notably against Father Étienne. The pope accused him of having little regard for the Holy See. He also accused him of having distributed arbitrarily, and almost entirely for the French missions, the funds received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith."<sup>104</sup> The ambassador felt that since he had no basis upon which to judge the truth of the pope's charges, the government should encourage the Lazarists and Étienne to resolve these issues directly with the Holy See.<sup>105</sup>

Vito Guarini also reported that in a conversation with Cardinal Lambruschini, the papal Secretary of State, he had to correct the false rumor that Étienne had refused to recognize the papal rescript given to Nozo. He told Lambruschini that Nozo had renounced the rescript voluntarily. Lambruschini told Guarini that he did not have a high opinion of Étienne based on his contact with him while he was the nuncio in Paris. The cardinal also commented that he believed Étienne was an "intriguer" (*intrigante*).<sup>106</sup> This was not the time for the French Lazarists and Étienne to be out of favor in Rome.

When Nozo's October circular reached Italy, Michele Antonio Cremisini, the visitor of the Roman province, decided to protest the Congregation's "anomalous status" (*stato d'anomalia*).<sup>107</sup> Cremisini wrote to the pope, via the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, asking for

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<sup>103</sup> In the fall of 1840, at the request of the French Foreign ministry, Étienne undertook a diplomatic mission to Lebanon to discourage the local Maronite Christian population from revolting against Egyptian domination. The French government, which took its protectorate over middle-Eastern Christians very seriously, was trying to ease the situation. Word of this trip reached Rome. For a copy of Étienne's instructions from Adolph Thiers of the Foreign Ministry see Nozo II: *Documents 1835-1842*, C 39, bas 2°, 7, ACMP. For a copy of Étienne's report, "Notes sur les espérances du Catholicisme en Orient et sur les moyens propres à les réaliser," see *Antoura*, C 118, Haut Pauch I-b, 1°, ACMP. For details of the trip see Étienne's correspondence with Jean-Marie Aladel, *Étienne: Lettres 1839-1845*, C 40, H: 3, I: (39-73), pli, 1°, ACMP. Letters of September 13, 21, 27, 1840. See also Rosset's account, *Vie Étienne*, 101-114. Rosset quotes Étienne's closing remarks in his report: "It has been important for me and for our Congregation to have had the opportunity to give your Excellency a proof of the devotion that I always possess, for in serving the cause of France I will also be serving the cause of religion and of humanity," 114.

<sup>104</sup> Comte de Latour-Maubourg to François Guizot, letter of 27 November 1841, *Correspondance Politique: Rome*, 983: 206, AMAE. In his *Relazione* (24-25), Guarini recalled that upon his return from Paris he had met Justin de Jacobis, an Italian Lazarist who was prefect apostolic of Ethiopia. De Jacobis was awaiting mission funds from Étienne in Paris. Guarini reported that Étienne had forbidden him to give any funds to De Jacobis since he did not consider the mission to be sponsored by the Congregation. Propaganda also received word that monies intended to support the mission in the United States also had not been distributed. These charges were not greeted kindly at Propaganda Fide, as will be seen

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 30, ACMP.

<sup>107</sup> For a biographical notice of Cremisini (1795-1875) see *Relations Abrégées*, 4: 461-83.

"an efficacious intervention on behalf of his Congregation's welfare."<sup>108</sup> The visitor told the Holy See that the sexennial assembly, held the previous July, had resulted in a "provisional government" for the Congregation.<sup>109</sup> He charged that this situation was now the source of "anguish" not only for the Roman province but for the entire Congregation and the Daughters of Charity. The anguish also came from their continued dependence on a French-dominated community government. Cremisini expressed his fears about holding the upcoming general assembly under these chaotic conditions.<sup>110</sup>

On 11 January 1842, Cardinal Nora Patrizi, the pro-prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, asked Vito Guarini to submit a report on the sexennial assembly. Eleven days later, Guarini submitted his account. He gave the facts on Nozo's convocation of the assembly, its constitutional purpose (to decide whether the convocation of a general assembly was warranted), and its composition. He also noted that before their arrival, the Italian delegates "had been entirely in the dark concerning what had happened within the Congregation in France." Guarini commented that the provincial assembly of the Roman province had voted against the convocation of a general assembly. He said, however, that if they had known about the "humiliating" state of the Congregation they would have voted for the only "remedy" available, the convocation of a general assembly.<sup>111</sup>

Guarini outlined the scandals surrounding Nozo's legal and financial problems. He repeated the allegations that Étienne was involved in financial speculations as well.<sup>112</sup> He also mentioned the dissension between Nozo and his council. According to Guarini, despite the need for a general assembly, Nozo opposed a convocation that was sure to lead to his condemnation.<sup>113</sup> Guarini gave the Holy See a straightforward summary of the assembly and Poussou's selection. This gave him the opportunity, however, to also make the points that he wanted to make concerning the community's future.

According to Guarini, given the Congregation's confused governance an insoluble crisis was at hand. If, on one hand, the superior

<sup>108</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 34, ACMP.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>112</sup> Here, Guarini is referring to the fact that in the brochure published against Nozo by his cousin Denis Hennecart Étienne had been accused of becoming publicly involved in investment schemes. Hennecart claimed that between Nozo and Étienne that Lazarists had become "a commercial agency." *Hennecart*, 11, AN.F19.6240.

<sup>113</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 37, ACMP.

general had compromised the Congregation's honor, then this was problematic; on the other hand, if the charges brought against Nozo by the council were not true, then the assistants were compromised. Guarini quoted Nozo as saying that "the assistants were all in need of the same baptism [removal]."<sup>114</sup> He also quoted a letter from one of Nozo's partisans in France, Barthélémy Trouve, who claimed that "everyone wants the council [the assistants and procurator] to be changed."<sup>115</sup>

Guarini did not believe that the coming general assembly could do anything to solve the "incurable" situation. In his opinion, it was the French domination of the Congregation that had caused these problems. The only solution, in his mind, was "the intervention of pontifical authority." The goal of this pontifical intervention would be "once and for all to establish a reasonable proportionality in the representatives to the general assembly. This action would ensure that elections would, as much as possible, be the result of the agreement of the entire Congregation and not solely of the French."<sup>116</sup>

Guarini also proposed another long-term solution to the Congregation's ills, moving the general's seat to Rome.<sup>117</sup> According to Guarini, this was "a solution foreseen by the founder himself."<sup>118</sup> Guarini then posed this rhetorical question: "When can be a better time than now to establish the superior general's seat in Rome, as foreseen by Saint Vincent?"<sup>119</sup> Guarini also gave several other reasons for the general's removal to Rome. He alleged, for example, that their respective governments had forbidden the provinces of Lithuania, Warsaw, and Brazil from corresponding with their French superiors. He said that the province of the United States also preferred having a representative in Rome to watch over its interests. Guarini pointed out that Rome was more centrally located than Paris, and would make the convocation of a general assembly more convenient. He also noted the small number of French houses and confreres compared with those of Italy.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps Guarini's most telling argument was an ultramontane one; the move to Rome "would make the head of the Congregation immediately depen-

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 40. In an undated letter from this period Nozo wrote that he had been quoted as saying, "that all the members of the council deserved to be expelled." The general denied that he ever said this, "I leave this to the judgment of God. I protest that I have never used this language." Baudrez, 1, ACMP.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Vincent de Paul to Bernard Codoing, letter of 10 July 1643, Coste, CCD, 2: 409.

<sup>119</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 41.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

dent upon the head of the Church. This would be in contrast to the Congregation's dependence on a secular government's nationalism and pretensions. Ultimately, this arrangement would be to the Congregation's benefit and God's glory."<sup>121</sup> The Roman visitor, Cremisini, and two of his consultants endorsed Guarini's memorandum.

After receiving Poussou's circular at the beginning of 1841, Cremisini again wrote to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He charged that the coming assembly "would not truly represent the entire Congregation."<sup>122</sup> The visitor noted the manifest disproportion in an assembly between the French and the Italians, not to mention the other nations." This situation could end only by reproducing the unfortunate events of the last general assembly." Cremisini pointed out that four French provinces, comprising a total of seventy priests, had representation at the last assembly. Meanwhile, Italy had only three provinces, representing a total of 250 priests. The votes of the French delegates, the French assistants general, and Étienne already assured a French majority at the next assembly. Cremisini observed that "the French preponderance did not work to the Congregation's advantage at the 1835 general assembly, and I do not expect it to do so at the next."<sup>123</sup>

Having laid out his arguments, the Roman visitor asked the Holy See to suspend the assembly's convocation, induce the superior general to resign, appoint a new superior general for this time only, and require him and his assistants to reside in Rome. A few weeks later, on 8 February 1842, Guarini received a request for more information from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Among other things, the Congregation requested a copy of the community's constitutions and a report "on the character and pretensions of Signor Étienne."<sup>124</sup>

After playing a leading role in the onslaught against Nozo, Étienne now fell under attack from Roman officials.<sup>125</sup> In February 1842, the French ambassador to the Holy See sent two dispatches to the Foreign Minister detailing Propaganda Fide's complaints against Étienne. François

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 2, ACMP.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> This document is a memorandum from Étienne to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, answering the charges made against him by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide. *Nozo II: Documents 1842-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 18, ACMP.

Guizot immediately passed these charges on to the Lazarists in Paris.<sup>126</sup>

In his *Notice*, Étienne blamed the Roman "intriguers" for the Holy See's intervention in the Congregation's affairs.<sup>127</sup> He also charged that these same confreres "sought to destroy my reputation and remove me from the debate." According to Étienne, they understood "that because of my relationship with the French government I would be the only serious obstacle to their plans." These missionaries then "made the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda a part of their plan." They did this by persuading him to write to the Foreign Minister, detailing "a series of accusations against me and against my direction of our foreign missions that the cardinal said was unacceptable to the Holy See."<sup>128</sup>

The general council met on 21 March to "consider the complaints against certain individuals of the Congregation and most especially against Monsieur Étienne, the procurator general." The council also had heard the rumor that Propaganda intended to support changes in the Congregation's administration, especially "to require a representative of the superior general to reside in Rome."<sup>129</sup> Étienne reported that he had consulted with the inter-nuncio in Paris, Antonio Garibaldi, asking how best to respond. He said that Garibaldi had "urged him to take advantage of this occasion to inform Propaganda of the true state of affairs. He believed that a simple exposition of the facts would suffice to dissipate the Roman accusations." During the council meeting, Étienne presented the memorandum that he proposed sending to the Foreign Minister. The council "approved all its points and authorized him to transmit it immediately to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to use as he sees fit."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> At the end of December, Guizot had written to Latour-Maubourg denying that the Lazarists influenced French policy in the Middle East. At the same time, however, he heaped high praise on the Congregation:

The king's government appreciates the well known merit and the utility of the Congregation of Saint Lazare, the enlightened zeal that animates them, the wisdom of their works, the effectiveness with which they laboriously serve the missions. The services that they render give them the right to receive the gratitude of all true friends of religion and humanity. It is not possible to deny these priests the esteem they generally deserve. Faithful to the teachings of their illustrious and holy founder, vowed body and soul to the most useful work of their most respectable apostolate, they courageously pursue their task. They do this without any other ambition or recompense than the good that they achieve.

Guizot to Latour-Maubourg, memorandum of 28 December 1841, *Correspondance Politique*: Rome, 983: 228, AMAE.

<sup>127</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 181, ACGR.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*



Étienne then wrote to Guizot:

Reading the contents of these two dispatches, while causing me great surprise, was also a source of great consolation to my heart. They have provided the key to an enigma that I did not previously know how to explain. For several years now, I have realized that Propaganda has held prejudices against me. I heard from all sides that the Congregation had made grave accusations against me. Yet, I never received any of these reproaches directly, and no one ever asked me for any explanation either directly or indirectly. I remained under the weight of these accusations. Often, the pain that I felt brought me to the point where I almost asked about the nature of these accusations. I wanted an opportunity to dissipate the prejudices held against me. On the other hand, however, I could not bring myself to believe that Propaganda would condemn me without giving me the opportunity to refute these grave and unjust insinuations. In the end, it seemed to me that the better course would be to conform myself to the gospel's teaching that I preach and to the example of Saint Vincent de Paul and accept this condemnation in silence....However, providence now has come to my aid through your mediation, Monsieur, without which I doubt I would ever have come to know the true causes of this mystery.<sup>131</sup>

Étienne thanked Guizot for having asked Propaganda to list specific complaints against him. This now gave him the opportunity to defend himself. It also gave him the chance "to testify that it never entered my thoughts to do anything that would be lacking in the respect and submission that I always have recognized that I owe the Sovereign Pontiff."<sup>132</sup>

Étienne proposed to answer each of Propaganda's charges in turn. In his *Notice*, Étienne later claimed that "I easily proved that all these allegations were nothing."<sup>133</sup> The first accusation he addressed was the charge that according to newspaper reports he had taken a public role in promoting investment in an industrial concern.<sup>134</sup> Étienne responded that this item first had appeared in the paper *L'Univers* in 1838. At the time, he said that he had written to the editors denying that he had any connection with the project in question. He demanded that they print a retraction, which the paper did. Étienne also denied that he had used 150,000 francs of the community's money in stock speculations. This was a charge that Guarini quoted Nozo as

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<sup>131</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 1, ACMP.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 41.

<sup>134</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 2, ACMP.

having made against the procurator general.<sup>135</sup>

The second accusation made by Propaganda against Étienne concerned his having undertaken a "secret" mission in 1840, without the Holy See's permission, on behalf of the French government. Propaganda said that this mission violated the neutrality expected by Rome of Catholic missionaries in the Middle East. It also said that the mission exposed the region's Catholics to greater danger from their Moslem rulers.<sup>136</sup> Étienne reminded the Foreign Minister that the mission he had undertaken at the government's request had not been "political" in nature. He recalled that Adolph Thiers of the Ministry had assured him that he could accept the mission without fear of displeasing the Holy See. Thiers also had said that a dispatch from Rome had confirmed that the trip was not at odds with papal policies.<sup>137</sup> Étienne also pointed out that he had asked the inter-nuncio if his taking on the mission would meet with Roman disapproval. Msgr. Garibaldi had replied "that although he had no official instructions from the Court of Rome, he could see no reason that the mission...could not take place." Finally, Étienne also noted that he had undertaken the mission with the general council's permission.<sup>138</sup>

The third charge leveled against Étienne was that he did not abide by the agreed upon distribution formula for the mission funds that the Congregation received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith. Étienne denied that any such formula existed. According to his account, the Society gave one annual sum to support all the Congregation's foreign missions. The general council then decided upon the allocation of these funds.<sup>139</sup> Here, Étienne does not mention that the council relied upon his recommendations as to the funding priorities.

Étienne next addressed the other specific points to this charge. Propaganda had said that the visitor of the American province, John Timon, had complained to Rome about the Texas mission being treated unfairly in the distribution of funds.<sup>140</sup> Étienne replied that while he did not know what Timon might have said in Rome, he did know that when Timon was recently visiting the

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<sup>135</sup> Guarini also claimed that this was the reason that Nozo wanted to remove Étienne from the scene by having him appointed to the proposed mission in Algeria. Guarini, *Relazione*, 15, ACMP.

<sup>136</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 2, ACMP.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Timon later was the first bishop of Buffalo, New York. For more information on Timon and his career see John Rybolt, C.M., ed., *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815-1987* (New York: New City Press, 1988).

mother house he had handed over to him all the monies destined for the United States. He acknowledged that Timon had expressed his disappointment that the council had not allocated more money for the American missions. Étienne claimed, however, that Timon “did not say a word to me suggesting that he did not believe he had received the full sum allotted to these missions.”<sup>141</sup>

Étienne also observed that Timon had asked for the authority to distribute the funds according to his own judgment. The general council turned down this request. Instead, it decided that the superior of each mission would send the visitor his accounting of the previous year’s funds and his request for new assistance. Timon was to forward these to Paris with whatever observations he wished to make. Then, the general council would decide what amounts would go to the various American mission stations. The council authorized Timon, “in the case of unforeseen necessity” and with the consent of his council, to adjust the amounts allocated by Paris. In this case, however, he was to notify Paris of the changes and the reasons for them. The council also recognized that Timon had the right to claim part of the mission funds to support his office.<sup>142</sup>

Étienne said that the council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith recognized that the Congregation’s general administration was best able to prioritize the various missions’ needs.<sup>143</sup> At this point, Étienne could not resist making some additional comments about Timon.

I could easily expand this explanation citing many other facts that would fully justify my conduct on this point. I believe this to be useless. You easily will appreciate, Monsieur, that if Propaganda chooses to listen to the complaints of a missionary and not to have confidence in the administration upon which he depends nor to trust the legitimate motives that it has adopted for the conduct of its internal regime, no effective administration would be possible. One quickly would see the entire destruction of the order that reigns in all our missions. Propaganda would be surprised if I brought to its attention the complaints that we have received against the administration of Monsieur Timon. These complaints, as well founded as they might be, have done nothing to lessen our esteem for this respectable and holy missionary. However, they serve to teach us that the most respectable and holy of men are not always free from errors, from oversights, and from other human

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<sup>141</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 3, ACMP.

<sup>142</sup> *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 11 November 1841, 1: 141-42, ACMP.

<sup>143</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 4, ACMP.

weaknesses. This insight has led us to the decisions that we have made concerning the administration of our American missions.<sup>144</sup>

Étienne next addressed similar accusations made by the Italian Lazarist, Justin de Jacobis, the head of the Ethiopian mission.<sup>145</sup> Étienne pointed out that he regularly replenished the Ethiopian mission's funds at the procure in Alexandria, Egypt. He noted that he had never received any complaints from the Ethiopian missionaries that they were short of funds.<sup>146</sup> A funding dispute had arisen in 1841 over a Roman pilgrimage that De Jacobis had made with a group of Ethiopians.<sup>147</sup> The amount available to De Jacobis in Alexandria was insufficient for the trip's expenses. According to Étienne, De Jacobis had made this trip without informing Paris and without asking for any extra financial help.<sup>148</sup> He claimed that when he learned of De Jacobis's need for extra funds, he had approached the council of the Lyons Society. He discovered that Cardinal Giacomo Franson of Propaganda Fide had already made a special request that the Society had granted.<sup>149</sup> Étienne blamed De Jacobis for any subsequent shortage since he had spent the entire treasury of 3,000 francs set aside at Alexandria.<sup>150</sup> Étienne also said the expectation that the Congregation use its limited mission funds to pay for De Jacobis's extraordinary expenditures was unfair.<sup>151</sup>

Étienne told Guizot that he could not understand how he was responsible for the separation of the Lithuanian and Brazilian provinces.<sup>152</sup> He pointed out that the separation and destruction of the Lithuanian province were the results of anti-Catholic Russian imperial

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> De Jacobis (1800-1860) was canonized in 1975. For more information see Auguste Devin, C.M., *L'Abyssinie et son apôtre ou Vie de Mgr. Justin De Jacobis évêque de Nilopolis et vicaire apostolique de l'Abyssinnie* (Paris: Chez l'auteur, rue de Sèvres, 95, 1866). See also Gabriel Larigaldie, C.M., *Héraut du Christ, Le Vénérable Justin de Jacobis, prêtre de la Mission, premier vicaire apostolique de l'Abyssinnie (1800-1860)* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1910).

<sup>146</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 5, ACMP.

<sup>147</sup> The purpose of De Jacobis' trip was to have a delegation of leading Ethiopian Coptic Orthodox clerics and laity meet the pope. The hope was that this would more favorably dispose them toward Catholicism in their homeland. For more information on this trip see *Vie De Jacobis*, 64-74, and *Héraut du Christ*, 147-156.

<sup>148</sup> The decision to make a detour to Rome from a pilgrimage which was headed to Jerusalem was made in route. The importance of getting this delegation to Rome to meet the pope was such that De Jacobis took whatever risks were necessary. See *Vie De Jacobis*, 64-65.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>150</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 5, ACMP.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

policies.<sup>153</sup> Regarding the province of Brazil, Étienne noted that the government had mandated its separation both from the Portuguese province and from the Congregation.<sup>154</sup>

The substance of the fifth charge addressed by Étienne was that he "favored the 'French' missions to the detriment of the Congregation's other missions."<sup>155</sup> Étienne pointed out that the practice of characterizing the various missions according to the nationalities who ran them was not new and that Propaganda itself described them in this way. He used as an example the Lazarist presence in Peking where a "French" mission and a "Portuguese" mission were served respectively and exclusively by French and Portuguese Lazarists. He pointed out that the Holy See had started this practice when it, and the French government, agreed to confide the Levantine and Chinese missions exclusively to the "French" Lazarists. Also, the Holy See and the Portuguese government had decided to confide another mission in China exclusively to the "Portuguese" Lazarists. According to Étienne, even if these missions were "French" or "Portuguese" they still "belonged to the same Congregation and depended on the same resources and administration."

The final "grave" charge made by Propaganda was that Étienne "had the pretension of exercising the office of procurator general, although a procurator general already existed in Rome representing the entire Lazarist Congregation."<sup>156</sup> Étienne wrote to Guizot, "I declare to your Excellency that until this moment I was not aware that we possessed, in Rome, a procurator general for the entire Lazarist Congregation." He explained that throughout its history the Congregation had only one procurator general. This official always worked under the superior general's authority. Étienne expressed his astonishment to learn the Holy See presumed that Vito Guarini served as the Congregation's procurator general. Propaganda had even said that Guarini "was elected to this position by his confreres." Étienne told the Foreign Minister that he could only conclude "that someone

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<sup>153</sup> As has been noted, because of the tightening of Russian religious policies against Catholicism the Lithuanian province elected its own visitor with subsequent confirmation, when possible, by the superior general. During this period, the Russian government pursued policies that were designed to destroy all Roman Catholic religious communities. In December 1842, the imperial government suppressed the Congregation and ordered its members to become members of the diocesan clergy. For more information see *Pologne*, 694-735.

<sup>154</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 6, ACMP.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

has given Propaganda incorrect information on this point."<sup>157</sup>

Étienne observed that according to the Congregation's constitutions, the procurator general was not elected but appointed by the superior general. He then commented, "I have held this position since July 1827. Subsequent superiors general have confirmed me in my exercise of this responsibility. My nomination to hold this post was announced to the entire Congregation. This has not been done with respect to Monsieur Guarini."<sup>158</sup>

Étienne further explained that until 1792 the superior general customarily had appointed a French Lazarist to serve in Rome. This official had the title of "French procurator." His responsibility was to conduct the community's affairs with the Holy See under the superior general's direction. Étienne noted that since the reestablishment of governmental unity in 1827, the superior general had filled this position, "provisionally with an Italian Lazarist, at this moment it is Monsieur Guarini."<sup>159</sup> Étienne professed that "he could not understand how Propaganda could conclude that Monsieur Guarini was the procurator general of the entire Congregation."<sup>160</sup>

In his *Relazione*, Guarini gives his own version of this affair.<sup>161</sup> He claimed that in 1836, when Nozo had appointed him, he had asked him to clarify his position and title. According to Guarini, Nozo replied, "You are the procurator general in Rome to deal with the Holy See concerning the Congregation's affairs. Monsieur Étienne is procurator general in Paris to deal with the government here."<sup>162</sup> Later in August 1841, Nozo sent Guarini another letter outlining his rights and duties, saying he had consulted with his council on the matter.<sup>163</sup> Guarini noted that Nozo, in his circular of 28 October 1841, had made no mention (*ne verbum quidem*, "not even a word") of his position as

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> In the minutes of the general council meeting of 11 January 1836, Étienne recorded Guarini's original appointment: "Monsieur Ferrari *procureur général français* at Rome, has manifested his desire to be replaced in this office and receive another assignment. The council has agreed to his desire, and has designated as his successor, Monsieur Guarini of the house of Monte Citorio in Rome," *General Council Minutes*, 1: 78, ACGR. At the meeting of 18 April 1836, the Italian assistant brought to the council's attention that the visitor of the Roman province had appointed "Monsieur Guarini, *procureur de la Congrégation à Rome* to also serve as procurator of another house outside the city. Guarini complained of this additional appointment which the council ordered reversed. Ibid., 1: 81.

<sup>160</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 7, ACMP.

<sup>161</sup> For a detailed discussion of the whole question of a procurator general in Rome see Gabriel Perboyre's notes, *Cremisini et Guarini*, ACMP.

<sup>162</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 47, ACMP.

<sup>163</sup> As noted previously, there were no meetings of the general council held between March and November of 1841.

procurator in Rome. However, he said he did receive a letter from Nozo soon after saying, "I persist in my determination concerning you. However, in the present unfortunate circumstances and given the present disposition of spirits, if I were to put this decision into effect, it would cause great problems for me and the Congregation in France."<sup>164</sup>

Étienne pointed out to Guizot that Propaganda believed that the sexennial assembly had left the congregation with two heads and that this irregular situation demanded Roman intervention. The Sacred Congregation had said that "understandably this state of affairs upsets most of these worthy French Lazarists." Propaganda attributed the problems to "the reprehensible conduct of certain individuals." Étienne felt that Rome was looking for an opportunity "to change the position and the existence of our Congregation."<sup>165</sup>

Étienne said he would willingly resign as procurator general to allow the appointment of someone who was "more worthy to occupy this post." He also said, however, that he believed that his actions as procurator general were not the real source of the problems with the Holy See. Propaganda was merely using these as excuses to demonstrate the need for the procurator or superior general to reside in Rome. Étienne's analysis of this strategy was unambiguous: "This would upset the order of things established by our constitutions for the last two hundred years. Their aim is to replace it with something entirely new."<sup>166</sup>

Étienne next gave a brief chronology of the present crisis. Speaking about Nozo's election in 1835, Étienne noted that "at the time the majority of the assembly's members believed that he possessed the personal qualities needed to occupy this eminent position. However, his subsequent acts caused a great commotion both inside and outside the Congregation. This soon proved that the positive judgments made by those who had voted for him were incorrect."<sup>167</sup>

Étienne then went on to make a charge against Nozo that appears nowhere else. He said that Nozo knew "there were some confreres who believed that his election was invalid."<sup>168</sup> Consequently, he went to Rome "to ask the sovereign pontiff to confirm his election."<sup>169</sup> Étienne said that

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<sup>164</sup> Quoted in Guarini, *Relazione*, 47-48, ACMP.

<sup>165</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 8, ACMP.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Étienne held this position as has been seen, see *Notice*, 34-35.

<sup>169</sup> Étienne, *Propaganda*, 9, ACMP.

Nozo took this trip "without informing the council of its true purpose."<sup>170</sup> What he fails to mention is that the purpose of this trip in the summer of 1837 was to attend the hundredth anniversary celebration for Saint Vincent's canonization.<sup>171</sup> Étienne said that Nozo knew that a Roman appeal was not necessary, since the Congregation's constitutions called for a general assembly to judge such a question of irregularity. According to Étienne, Nozo's motivation in seeking a papal sanation was to avoid the consequences of his actions in France and cultivate papal favor for the future. Étienne makes no mention of how the Holy See responded to Nozo's alleged request.

Étienne told the Foreign Minister of Nozo's unsuccessful attempt to head off a condemnation by the sexennial assembly. He described how Nozo surreptitiously obtained permission from the Holy See to name a vicar general. The Foreign Minister heard how the assembly had unanimously decided to deprive Nozo of his authority and entrust it to a vicar general of its own choosing. Étienne told Guizot that the general council believed that Nozo was trying to convince the Holy See to overturn the assembly's decision. He also claimed that Guarini, as a Nozo supporter, also was working toward this end.<sup>172</sup>

Étienne closed his lengthy memorandum by saying:

It seems to me that this explanation of our present position should shed a bright light on the allegations contained in the communication from Propaganda. It also should explain the prejudice that it nourishes against me personally and against certain individuals of our Congregation. This explanation has made it necessary to reveal the actual state of our community's administration. Your Excellency can appreciate this...and I am confident that you will give the French ambassador in Rome instructions to enlighten the Holy See and Propaganda about the true state of things. This will reveal the source of the dark insinuations made against certain members of our Congregation.<sup>173</sup>

In his *Notice*, Étienne commented that the Foreign Minister wrote a reply to Rome, "which undoubtedly displeased Propaganda with its praise of me." He said that Guizot "strongly reproached Propaganda for not rec-

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<sup>170</sup> Vito Guarini mentions that while in Rome, Nozo had approached the pope about the question of the validity of vows taken by French confreres during the vicariate of Charles-Vincent de Paul Boujard before he had been confirmed by apostolic authority. See Guarini, *Relazione*, 17, ACMP. Recall that this was the basis upon which Nozo declared the Ferdinand Bailly's vows were invalid.

<sup>171</sup> For Nozo's description of his journey to Italy and the anniversary celebrations see Nozo, *Circulaires*, 2: 490-96.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



ognizing the twenty-one years of devoted service that I had given the Church through my work to restore and develop our foreign missions."<sup>174</sup>

In his notes on Guarini's *Relazione*, Gabriel Perboyre noted that during this period Nozo was visiting houses in the French provinces. He was speaking out against the assistants and administration in Paris, especially Étienne.<sup>175</sup> Nozo's cause had some vocal supporters among the French and Italian Lazarists. To these supporters, Nozo raised the possibility of establishing himself in Rome.<sup>176</sup> Perboyre said that he heard Nozo often say that "if the French no longer wanted him, the Italians would certainly welcome him."<sup>177</sup>

At the general council meeting on 28 March 1842, Poussou asked whether he should send a letter to Nozo asking him to "convoke the general assembly as soon as possible to end the temporary state of affairs established by the sexennial assembly."<sup>178</sup> The council agreed, and Poussou wrote on 29 March to Nozo:

Since the resolutions adopted by the last sexennial assembly have been executed, we are sure you will agree with us that the order of things that it established must necessarily be of a temporary nature. The general welfare of Saint Vincent's two families demands that this situation not last too long. After prayerful consideration before God, we believe that it is urgent that the general assembly, which alone can remedy this situation, take place this year. We believe that the circumstances that the Congregation finds itself in demand this. It is crucial then, that you convoke the assembly as soon as possible. We refer you to your circular letter of 28 October of last year. We presume that you will want to have your council's advice on this important measure. We feel a responsibility to advise you to convoke the assembly with the briefest possible delay. We unanimously recommend that you should convoke the assembly to meet this coming August 15th.<sup>179</sup>

At the next council meeting on 5 April, Étienne announced that "Monsieur Nozo is disposed to agree to your request, and he will convoke the general assembly for the coming 15 August."<sup>180</sup>

Soon after issuing the letter convoking the general assembly Nozo wrote to an unknown correspondent,

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<sup>174</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 41-42.

<sup>175</sup> Perboyre, *Cremisini et Guarini*, 3, ACMP.

<sup>176</sup> Étienne, *Notice*, 42.

<sup>177</sup> Perboyre, *Cremisini et Guarini*, 4, ACMP.

<sup>178</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 182, ACGR.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 183.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 183-84.

By this time you will have received your copy of the convocation letter for the general assembly. I am writing a short letter to ask your advice, but since you do not have a sufficient knowledge of the situation I believe it is necessary to tell you, as much as possible, what has taken place.

Given the calumnies that external enemies have spread about the Congregation and my person and given the manner in which many of our own confreres have already judged me, it seems to me that I cannot offer my resignation without great dishonor. The Congregation will share this dishonor equally. These same confreres openly have insinuated that it would be better for me to resign so that they will not have to reveal the grave charges which exist against me. However, if I resign, one could then easily believe that it is because of the very grave charges made against my reputation. These confreres have demanded a general assembly for this year. But what will be the result? Do they hope that I will give my resignation? If I do not, will they then want to depose me? Do they want a deposition by the assembly? Would not this be a great scandal? Constitutionally speaking, I do not believe that I have anything to fear. If the deposition does not take place, they will need to name a vicar general. However, a vicar general already possesses all my powers. I have not interfered in any way in his administration. I only ask to live my community life quietly and to be left tranquilly alone in my room.

I fear that the only result of a general assembly will be afflicting scenes and unfortunate consequences. Please share with me, according to your prudent judgment, your thoughts and those of your councilors or other missionaries, and please do me the favor of giving me your advice.<sup>181</sup>

While all of this was happening, Joseph Rosati, C.M., the bishop of Saint Louis, arrived in Paris. He was returning from a papal diplomatic mission to Haiti.<sup>182</sup> Rosati thus learned first hand of the crisis that was dividing the Congregation. From Paris, he traveled to Rome. On 24 April, Rosati and Guarini visited the Cardinal Secretary of State and spoke about the situation in France. Guarini reported that Cardinal Lambruschini had asked Rosati's opinion of whether if the general assembly took place as scheduled it would elect Étienne as the new superior general. Guarini reported that Rosati had replied that the Italian assistant

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<sup>181</sup> Nozo to an unknown correspondent, date unknown, *Nozo II: Documents 1835-1842*, C 39, bas 2°, ACMP.

<sup>182</sup> For more information on Rosati see Frederick J. Easterly, C.M., *The Life of Rt. Rev. Joseph Rosati, C.M., First Bishop of St. Louis, 1789-1843* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1942). See also *American Vincentians*.

general had assured him that Étienne would not be elected. Guarini gave his opinion, saying that since an assembly could only elect a Frenchman it could not be considered a canonical election.<sup>183</sup>

When the Roman visitor, Michele Cremisini, received the letter convoking the general assembly, he immediately informed Cardinal Pietro Ostini, the prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Early in May, Ostini called a meeting of Cremisini, Guarini, the sub-secretary of the Congregation, Giuseppe Bizarri, and Joseph Rosati. Ostini asked them whether the Holy See should allow the general assembly to meet.<sup>184</sup> The cardinal prefect's position was that, given the divisions between the pro-Nozo and anti-Nozo factions, an assembly posed great dangers. Particularly, the danger of scandal would be too great. Ostini decided that the Congregation would write to Nozo ordering him to suspend the general assembly's convocation and come to Rome. With the pope's approval, Rosati was to write to the assistants telling them that the true reason for Nozo's summons to Rome was to induce him to "spontaneously offer his resignation."<sup>185</sup>

Meanwhile in Paris, relations between Poussou, the assistants, and Nozo deteriorated even further. The council had set 18 May as the date for the mother house's domestic assembly. Nozo did not receive this announcement well. He "declared that he did not wish for the domestic assembly to take place so soon. He has accompanied this declaration with threats of legal action that reveal his violent irritation."<sup>186</sup> The council decided to postpone the domestic assembly until after Pentecost for the sake of peace and to avoid any more scandal. However, the council ordered a statement to be inserted in the minutes saying that they were doing this only as a matter of "concession," and without recognizing any right of Nozo to overturn its first decision.<sup>187</sup>

At the council meeting held on 21 May, Poussou communicated the letter that he had received from Rosati. He asked for the members advice. The council responded by adopting four resolutions.

1. The council expresses its astonishment that Rome has taken this course of action without consulting the administration of the Congregation that alone possesses the documents that could enlighten this situation.

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<sup>183</sup> Guarini, *Relazione*, 50, ACMP.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>185</sup> Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, *Consultazione*, 3, ACMP.

<sup>186</sup> *General Council Minutes*, meeting of 15 May 1842, 1: 192, ACGR.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

2. The council must blame the Roman confreres, whom the Holy See consulted, for taking such a grave responsibility upon themselves without consulting their superiors. We believe that a better course of action would have been to submit this to the judgment of the coming general assembly.

3. The council also blames the conduct of Monsieur Guarini in this circumstance. 1. He has, on his own, given information at the Cardinal Prefect's request without first consulting the council of the Congregation that he represents in Rome. 2. For having said that a general assembly would be powerless to remedy the misfortunes suffered by the Congregation. This is contrary to the constitutions that say that a general assembly is the sole means provided to the Congregation in just such a grave situation. It expresses these reservations about Monsieur Guarini's conduct for the future general assembly's consideration.

4. The council resolves, 1. That in response it will do nothing to suggest that it approves of these decisions. Its conduct will be purely passive. 2. That all responsibility for what will follow falls completely on those who have brought this situation about. 3. That out of respect for the Holy See, to which this affair has been so imprudently referred, we will not publicize this matter.... We will bear it in silence without, however, renouncing our right to employ all legitimate means that the circumstances permit and that may have to be used to save the Congregation from a ruin that now appears inevitable. 4. That it unanimously adopts the points of this resolution reserving the future right of carefully reviewing and revising this as necessary for the Congregation's welfare.<sup>188</sup>

On 16 May, Rosati wrote to the Italian assistant Pier Paolo Sturchi describing the letter that Poussou would soon receive from him,

For the rest Cardinal Ostini...has charged me to write to Monsieur Poussou about these decisions in order not to alarm you and have you think that its purpose is to keep Monsieur Nozo in his position as superior general. Rather, its purpose is to avoid the inevitable troubles and unfortunate circumstances that a general assembly called to solicit his resignation or legislate his disposition would cause. This is why Rome has summoned him. We have no reason to doubt that he will agree to the Holy Father's desire. Cardinal Ostini...believes this measure to be necessary for our Congregation's welfare and honor....I believe that providence is arranging this opportunity to come to Rome to offer his resignation for the welfare of Monsieur Nozo. He should welcome the opportunity to relieve himself of the heavy burden of his responsibilities.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 196-97.

<sup>189</sup> Rosati to Sturchi, letter of 16 May 1842, *Nozo II: Documents, 1842-1866*, C 39, bas 2°, 23, ACMP.

According to Rosati, after Nozo's resignation, the vicar general and the council would already be in place to govern the Congregation. "When all the spirits are calmed," Rome would judge the "appropriate" time for the general assembly to meet. Rosati hoped that this strategy would diffuse the controversies and prevent "sinister judgments that would ruin the Congregation's reputation."<sup>190</sup> Rosati and Ostini's hope that forcing Nozo's resignation would restore peace ignored the fact that the Italian/French antagonisms had already taken over the unfolding of events.

On 1 June, Nozo issued a circular letter announcing the papal suspension of the general assembly. He also announced his own summons to Rome, "for consultations."<sup>191</sup> Nozo ended his letter by saying,

All this should be for each of us a great source of consolation and a powerful motive for gratitude that the Vicar of Jesus Christ has deigned to give his attention to us and extend a secure and protecting hand in the critical circumstances in which we find ourselves. For myself, I must admit that I find that I am greatly troubled. Given the many and grave considerations that I am burdened with, I have not found that tranquility that I greatly need and desire to assure the peace and health of my soul. The contradictory advice that I have received has only increased my anxiety and my uncertainties. However, now I find myself relieved from all inquietude. I leave everything to the wisdom of His Holiness, and I will be honored to conform myself to all of his orders and his least desires.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *General Council Minutes*, 1: 196-97, ACGR.

<sup>191</sup> *Nozo II; Documents*, C 39, bas 2°, 24, ACMP.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* 2-3.